

I. DEVELOPMENT ASSISTANCE CENTER (DAC)

A. PROFILE

The Development Assistance Center staff consults with customers on all aspects of the development process and applicable development regulations and provides guidance to customers on the appropriate process they should follow to get their proposed projects approved.

The Development Assistance Center (DAC) is staffed by consulting planners and their support staff, document management and research staff as well as staff co-located from Austin Energy and Austin Water. The following is a list of services provided by the Development Assistance Center.

- Board of Adjustment and Sign Review Board variance support
- CBD After-hours Concrete Pour Permits
- Copies of official public records related to development applications
- Determinations/Outdoor Amplified Sound Permits
- Development process and regulation consulting
- Document management and sales
- Land Status/Legal Tract
- Mobile Retail Registration
- Outdoor Music Venue Permits
- Research assistance
- Sell copies of zoning maps and standard GIS map products
- Sign Applications
- Site Development Determinations/Exemptions
- Site Plan Corrections
- Temporary Use/~~Carnival~~ Permits
- Utility consulting including Electric Service Plan Application (ESPA)
- Water and wastewater meter sales and electrical meter can sales
- Zoning verification

Comment [BR1]: I deleted and modified previous paragraphs when I added the bullets.

The DAC also has a group responsible for document management and research that is responsible for maintaining the official public records of development applications,

including case files for zoning, subdivision, and site plan applications, official record-set copies of all approved site plans and building plans, as well as copies of recorded subdivision plats in accordance with State records retention regulations. Record-set site plans are maintained on-site, along with recent zoning, site plan, and subdivision case files. Older plans are stored off-site in a third-party controlled warehouse. Staff assigned to this group also scan all approved site plans and recorded subdivision plats so they can be uploaded to the AMANDA permit systems and be available to the public on-line and other staff city-wide.

The Development Assistance Center is located on the main floor of One Texas Center with the Records Research group located to the left of the main public entrance and the DAC consulting group located to right of the entrance. Both of these areas are enclosed in glass and readily visible to customers entering the building. This location, while convenient to some customers, also makes the staff in these counters somewhat responsible for directing all customers to various other floors of the building depending on the service they are seeking.

Authority

The activities of the Development Assistance Center are primarily focused on assisting customer in their efforts to navigate through the various steps necessary to demonstrate that their project complies with the multitude of regulations contained in the local Land Development Code (Chapters 25-1 through 25-13) and applicable State and Federal Laws.

Organization

The Development Assistance Center has an unconventional organizational structure. Unlike most organizations that have groups of employees performing the same function and supervision provided based on the number of employees in each discipline, the DAC has a very flat organizational structure. The customer-consulting portion of the Division primarily consists of specialists that provide preliminary information to customers rather than in depth analysis and direction. The more in-depth analysis occurs when formal plans are submitted to another Division consisting of employees with similar technical skills as those in the DAC. This organizational configuration requires a delicate balancing act for DAC employees to maintain strong working relationships with their technical peers in other Divisions while reporting to a Manager on a day-to-day basis that does not share the same technical background. Employee surveys and interview responses indicate that that this arrangement maybe contributing to a sense that the Division is not functioning efficiently. A review of the results of the employee surveys indicated a very high level of dissatisfaction with how the organization responds to problems and the overall level of communication that exists within the Division.

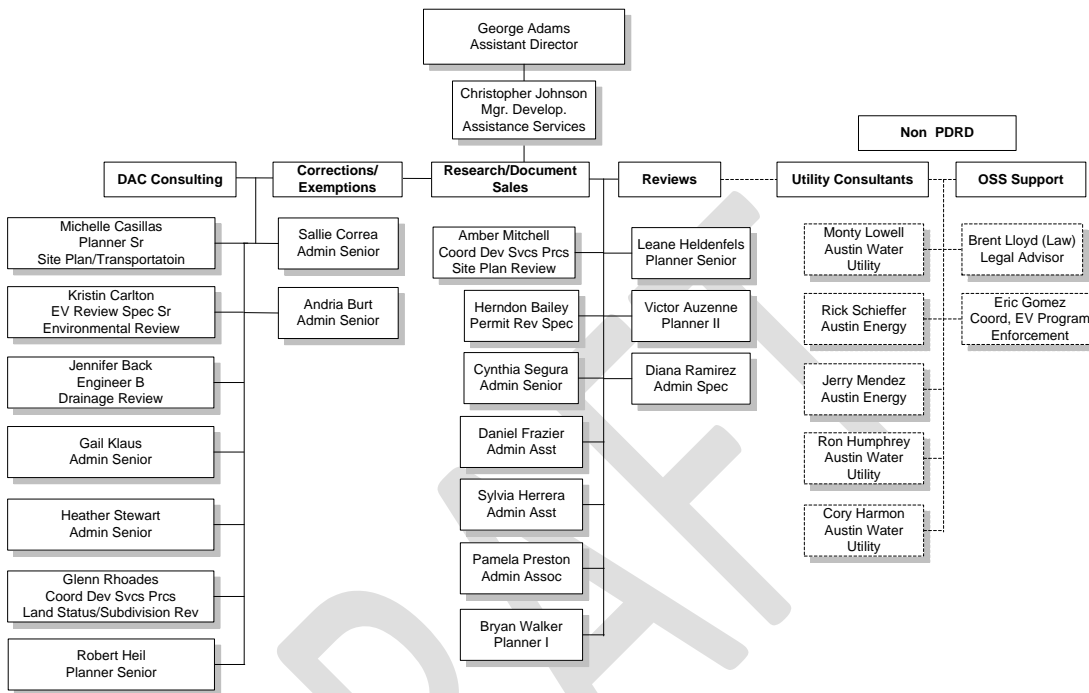
The organization for the Development Assistance Center is shown in Figure 53, with staff function shown in Table _____. **There are many errors in the Org chart and table below**

Comment [PZ2]: A key point. One option would be to have the employees part of their other Division but with daily supervision by DAC?

Comment [BR3]: How about this approach? We leave the reporting system in place but require that an MOU be developed that established a framework for the individual employee's technical area of expertise to be respected. In addition, a conflict resolution process would be established that includes participation from the department/division that houses the employees technical peers.

Comment [AG4]: John Beasley is working on a revised Org Chart for DAC.

Comment [MM[5]: You may want to note on all org charts and tables that information may not reflect current status Martinez.



Staffing

Table
Staff Functions In Development Assistance Center

Position Title	Number of Positions	Responsibilities	Reports To
Assistant Director	1	Manages Building Inspection, Commercial Building Review, Permit Center, Residential Review, and Site/Subdivision Inspections Manages Current Planning, Development Assistance Center, Land Use Review and CodeNEXT.	Director
Mgr. Develop Assistance Center	1	Manages Development Assistance Center	Assistant Director

DAC Consulting

Position Title	Number of Positions	Responsibilities	Reports To
Site Plan/Transportation Development Services Process Coordinator	1	Zoning/Neighborhood Planning/Site Plan Consulting, Zoning Compliance Letters	Mgr. Develop Assistance Center
Development Services Process Coordinator	1	Transportation/Site Plan consulting, commercial design standards consulting, sidewalk fee in lieu/waivers and transportation waivers supporting Residential Review staff	Mgr. Develop Assistance Center
Sr Planner	1	Provides customer consulting for zoning/site plan	Mgr. Develop Assistance Center
EV Review Spec Sr, Environmental Review	1	Provides customer consulting with environmental/landscape/tree regulations, resolves environmental red-tag violation notices, boat dock/Lake Austin issues	Mgr. Develop Assistance Center
Engineer B, Drainage Review	1	Provides customer consulting for compliance with drainage engineering and water quality review	Mgr. Develop Assistance Center
Board of Adjustment Support			
Sr Planner	1	Board of Adjustment Liaison. Assists customers with BOA variance requests, prepares notice language, facilitates BOA hearing	Mgr. Develop Assistance Center
Admin. Spec.	1	Processes notifications and agendas for Board of adjustments	Mgr. Develop Assistance Center
Corrections/Exemptions			
Admin Sr	2	Processes site plan exemption and correction requests – data entry, sending comments to applicants, schedule/monitor correction appointments	Mgr. Develop Assistance Center
Research/Document Sales			
Permit Rev Spec	1	Research Lead. Records management lead, assists customers with records research, responds to open records requests..	Mgr. Develop Assistance Center
Admin Senior	1	Research associate. Assists customers with records requests. Records management, assist with open records requests	Mgr. Develop Assistance Center

Position Title	Number of Positions	Responsibilities	Reports To
Admin Asst	2	Research associate. Assist customers with records requests. Records/file management.	Mgr. Develop Assistance Center
Admin Senior	2	Document Sales. Scan approved documents, upload into AMANDA database, assist customers picking up copies of plans, zoning verification	Mgr. Develop Assistance Center
Reviews			
Planner II	1	Review signs permit applications, billboard relocation permits, outdoor amplified sound/outdoor music venue permits	Mgr. Develop Assistance Center
Planner I	1	Review sign permit applications	Mgr. Develop Assistance Center
Reception			
Admin Asst	1	Development Assistance Center Reception	Mgr. Develop Assistance Center
NOT PDRD			
Utility Consultants			
Austin Water Utility Taps	2	Utility tap sales, tap receipts, service history research	AWU Taps office manager
Austin Water Utility	1	Pipeline engineering/plumbing consultation. Assists customers with AWU and plumbing questions. Reviews corrections/exemption for plumbing and utility issues	AWU Pipeline Engineering manager
Austin Energy	2	Provides consulting on placement of electrical lines and authorizes electrical meter can sales	AE
OSS Support			
TOTAL			

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Comment [MM[6]: Positions were removed. Not accurate.

B. POSITIVE FINDINGS

- The Development Assistance Center was established to provide a single location where customers can receive information about the development process.
- The employees in the Development Assistance Center are selected because of their superior one-on-one customer service skills.
- The City has provided comprehensive on-line video training programs to assist customers in understanding the many steps required to obtain a permit to develop.
- The customer waiting area in the DAC is comfortable and provides a computer monitor that tracks wait times for both the DAC and the Permit Center so Permit Center customers can wait here when the Permit Center waiting area is full.

C. ORGANIZATION ISSUES

A problem we have observed while reviewing numerous other jurisdictions has been that the development departments fail to prioritize the need to provide accurate information to customers during the earliest stages of development. Frequently jurisdictions will simply assign a Planner-of-the-day to be available to respond to customer questions. Because this is not the primary assignment of the Planner, there tends to be limited commitment to the quality of the services provided at the counter. The City of Austin has made a major commitment to assisting customers during the initial stages of a development project by creating the Development Assistance Center. Staff appointed to positions in this Division have demonstrated good customer service skills and are not expected to treat their interactions with customers as a secondary component of their jobs. This attitude is reflected by all of the staff assigned to the Division, including staffs from Austin Water and Austin Energy who are co-located at this site.

Some consideration has been given to relocating this Division to report to the Assistant Director responsible for Commercial and Residential Plan Review, but upon reflection, retaining the Division in its current configuration seems to be appropriate as a means of better aligning the Planners in DAC with the activities of the Current Planning Section that reports to the same Assistant Director.

There is one issue regarding the existing organization that should be addressed. A review of the Staff Functions Table above will clearly identify what we believe is a problem regarding the span of control of the Manager of Development Assistance Services. Currently there are nearly 20 positions assigned to report directly to the Division Manager. While it is apparent that there is a vast amount of diversity among the individual job descriptions making the process of grouping similar jobs together to report to a supervisor, we believe there should be an effort made to designate lead positions to at least help distribute some of the routine administrative functions that now are the responsibility of the Division Manager. Within this Division are two (2) Development Services Process Coordinator positions with job descriptions that specify they may supervise other staff and there are three (3) Senior Planner positions with job descriptions

Comment [BR7]: Yes. I think this is one situation where the Department has actually sought out employees who genuinely enjoy dealing face-to-face with the public and assigned them to these short exchange types of interactions. This has eliminated the problem we see so often that some technical staff (i.e. Planners) believe it is beneath them to come to the counter to answer basic questions.

Comment [PZ8]: Is this your conclusion?

Comment [BR9]: Let's discuss so more. I have feelings both ways. Part of my concern was about loading too much onto the Building Official and that most of the work in DAC seems to be more aligned with planning functions.

Comment [PZ10]: I'll have to look at my latest draft. I think I put DAC with plan review but I could go either way.

that indicate they may act in a lead role. The DAC Manager should utilize these employees to assist him in providing administrative oversight of the employees in the Division. See comment BR9- agree with the need for a supervisor over the Research/Documents Section as well as the issue of the two DSPC positions supervising staff from different technical area (Chris Johnson).

1. **Recommendation: The DAC Division Manager should designate several employees to perform lead duties to help reduce the number of employees directly reporting to the Division Manager.**

Performance Evaluations

Maintaining quality control in the delivery of public services can be very challenging, particularly when the supervisor's span of control exceeds industry standards. Currently the Manager of the Development Assistance Center has 20 direct reports. Closely monitoring the daily activities of this large of a group of both technical and administrative staff is unreasonable. It was therefore not surprising to learn through confidential questionnaires and interviews that periodic performance evaluations were of little value to the employees due to the lack of specificity regarding the individual's performance and responsibilities. We have addressed the need to designate first-line supervisors in the Division elsewhere in this report. However, to change the culture of the Division to make Performance Evaluations meaningful it is necessary to establish expectations for the employees and to have a system in place to monitor performance against those expectations. Elsewhere in this report are more detailed discussions about the need for individual job performance standards, the existence of an auditing program to confirm performance and the presence of an on-going staff training program to address deficiencies observed during auditing. All of these issues need to be addressed in order to establish a culture where performance evaluations are treated as valuable tools to help ensure that quality service is consistently provided to the City's customers.

2. **Recommendation: The DAC Manager should establish employee performance standards, performance auditing and ongoing employee training to bring meaning back to Employee Performance Evaluations.**

Performance Standards

The table below represents the Performance Measures currently utilized by the Development Assistance Center.

Table #
Performance Measures for the Development Assistance Center

The FTE numbers do not appear to be correct—I have seen no staffing increases since 2012, and in fact, lost a temporary Admin Associate position in FY15. (Comment from Chris Johnson).

Comment [BR11]: I added these sentences to provide more detail. I believe part of the problem has been that Department Management has chosen to transfer the problem employees to DAC rather than deal with them through discipline. It would not surprise me if these more senior staff were in fact the problem employees and therefore Chris has been reluctant to designate any of them as lead or supervisors. I know this seems to conflict with the statement above that they are good with customers, but I suspect their problem has been working within their professional peer groups or previous supervisors. Employee comments indicated there had been a lot of bad supervisors and some of them have left. [comment from CJ: the staff that were moved to DAC to solve a personnel problem were the Planner Senior serving in a zoning/site plan consulting role, and the Board of Adjustment function (Planner Senior and Admin Specialist) due to the Planner Senior formerly in that role (since retired) having issues with their supervisor.]

Comment [BR12]: Yes. He has at least two planner positions that could be tasked with the responsibility of supervision, but then again they might be supervising staff that have different technical skill. It certainly makes sense to have a supervisor for the Research/Documents section.

Comment [PZ13]: Should we try to be more specific?

	2011	2012	2013	2014*	2015
FTEs	17.5	18	2048	22	20
Customer wait time in minutes	12	14	12	11	15
# billboard relocation application processed	17	18	18	7	
Number of documents reproduced and distributed	51,384	64,634	67,379	63,678	70,000
Ratio docs reproduced/FTEs [There are only two staff involved in the reproduction and distribution of documents, so this is not a valid benchmark for DAC overall—it is just a benchmark for the two "Document Sales" Admin Senior positions.] Comment from Chris Johnson.	2,936	3,590	3,743	2,961	3,500
FTEs based on benchmark comparison	benchmark	22.0	22.9	22.1	23.8
# customers served	28,983	32,362	31,477	33,116	32,000
Ratio Customers served/FTEs	1,656	1,798	1,749	1,473	1,600
FTEs based on benchmark comparison	benchmark	19.5	19.0	19.6	19.3
# Board of Adjustment cases reviewed	143	146	142	1871	
# legal hours spent on One Stop Shop issues	1,200	1,325	1,500	1,500	

Comment [PZ14]: Are these up to date? I am asking for final 2014 numbers.

Comment [MM[15]: Two employees in DAC budget were incorrectly included. # should be 20. All

Comment [PZ16]: What benchmark?

Comment [BR17]: I established the 2011 as the benchmark year for comparison. It would probably be better if we had more years, but that is as far as they go back consistently in their reporting. I'm simply comparing 17.5 FTEs performed 51,384 documents in 2011, so how many FTEs should it take to produce 64,634 documents in 2012? suggests 22.0. This would have been better if I had the specific number of FTEs actually doing documents versus the total FTEs but I don't have that data.

Comment [AG18]: Picking up on the comments above I think this is somewhat confusing. Adams

Comment [AG19]: This number looks very high compared to previous years. Should it be 187 or other? Typo? Adams

As explained elsewhere in this report, we recognize the usefulness of collecting data on activity levels, but only to the extent that the data is utilized to make critical decisions about achieving and maintaining performance standards. With the exception of tracking the customer wait times, there are no other established performance standards adopted by the Division. The Division simply reports on activity levels rather than specifying performance expectations. In the case of tracking customer wait times we believe the current level of 15 minutes is an acceptable standards, however, we are concerned that this number represents an average rather than a goal to be achieved at least 90% of the time. A review of records for the month of August 2014 indicated that eight (8) customers waited more than one hour before staff could see them. We would recommend that the reports clarify that the Division's goal is to achieve this standard at least 90% of

the time rather than using an average. Based on our calculations for the month of August 2014 the wait time the Division achieved for 90% of its customers was **24 minutes**.

See Recommendation 8 where we indicate wait times should not exceed 15 minutes for any of the PDRD counters. This standard should be met 90% of the time.

Staffing Levels

A review of the activity levels in Table ___ above indicates that additional staffing has been approved for FY -14 (increase from 18 to 22 FTEs). This statement is incorrect—I have seen no increase in staffing and do not know where this information is coming from. In fact, with the adoption of FY14-15 Budget, DAC lost a temporary position. Comment from Chris Johnson. However there is no performance standard that is directly correlated to this change. Our review of records and input provided during staff interviews indicated there are no established units of workload that are used to compare against the capacity available in the form of existing staff resources. The performance measures table indicates the changes in activity levels from the previous year are very small or identify no increase in activity levels in those categories we would typically associate with the need for additional staffing. As a minimum, the performance measures should combine the FTEs and activity levels to establish a staffing ratio. An example would be measuring the number of documents reproduced and distributed against the number of staff available to perform that function. This measure could then be compared with a new measure that evaluates compliance with a turnaround time that meets customer expectations. Table ___ (Performance Measures Development Assistance Center) includes information based on FTE ratios per activity utilizing the total FTEs for the group rather than breaking down the FTEs by functions. A more accurate example would be taking the total number of documents reproduced and distributed divided by the FTEs available in that specific work group ($67,379/7 = 9,626/\text{FTE}$). Assuming the customers are satisfied with the current level of service and that level of service can be quantified as a performance standard (ex: responding to all records requests within 3 days of request 90% of the time), then the FTE ratio provides an example of appropriate staffing. If the customers are not satisfied with the current level of service then the desirable ratio should reflect a lower number per FTE and the need for additional staff.

3. Recommendation: The DAC Manager should establish performance standards for the Division that identify staffing ratios based on the FTEs available to accomplish specified activities consistent with service delivery standards.

Using the very simplistic method of comparing activity levels for selected services (ex: document reproduction) with the total staff available in the Section suggests that an additional three (3) positions could be added to the existing staff in order to maintain the same staffing ratio that existed in 2011 (benchmark year). However, we have a more specific recommendation later in this Chapter.

Comment [PZ20]: There were two computer tracking system on the counter. One was PDRD and I think the other was for one of the utilities. Can we get data for the later and make it clear that DRC management must be in charge of both. As you may recall in our tour, the manager basically said this was someone else, the same issue when I challenged the handouts.

Comment [PZ21]: Your earlier description of how to set staffing levels was right on, but then you moved into ratios based on 2011. This would be okay as one indicator of staffing needs but only one. I would rather talk about customer comments re this section. We need to do whatever it takes to get wait time down to 15 minutes. If that takes extra staff or changes in what they are doing, then we can make a justification.

Comments we have received from both staff and customers failed to suggest that there is a consistent and serious problem with wait times in order to receive service from technical staff providing consulting services. The exception to this observation is when certain key staff is unavailable due to sick leave or vacation. A frequently cited example is when the Environmental Review Specialist is unavailable. While staffs from other Land Use Review sections have been willing to provide assistance to DAC when other review specialists are on leave, such an arrangement has not been established with the group that could provide backup for the Environmental Review Specialist assigned to DAC. This issues needs to be addressed by either management establishing an agreement for backup for the DAC Environmental Review Specialist or the DAC manager needs to initiate a cross-training program utilizing his existing staff.

Comment [PZ22]: This doesn't seem right. I thought we had lots of complaints about long wait time here?

Comment [BR23]: The complaints about the long wait times were related to the Permit Center, not so much the DAC. I can take a look at the specific times for each discipline. I have also established a 90% wait time for transaction times. I will identify which functions seem to be consistently missing their target wait times in DAC .

4. Recommendation: Backup needs to be available for the Environmental Review Specialist in DAC through a cooperative agreement with Land Use Review or cross-training within DAC.

Comment [MM[24]: Any new EV resources must be coordinated and funding negotiated with Watershed Protection. Nickle

Comment [PZ25]: Will need to see what I said in Land Use re environmental review and we can compare notes.

It may be useful to examine how all the specialists in DAC are managed since they all have parallel Sections within PDRD. One option would be that DAC has daily management responsibilities but that the specialty section managers have responsibility for content, training, and providing coverage as needed.

Comment [PZ27]: I agree. Also, if under my scenario the Environmental Review Specialist was still part of the Environmental Group, then it is that groups responsibility to have it staffed at all times. I think, but not certain that I may have discussed this in my write up on the Land Use Environmental Section.

5. Recommendation: Examine how the DAC specialists are managed.

Staff assigned to the Document Management and Research Services group indicated in interviews that their current workload might be preventing them from completing all of the requirements established by the City's adopted 10-point Records Management Program. We support the importance of maintaining an up-to-date records management program because it is such an essential component of maintaining trust with the public and facilitating the work of the various technical experts throughout the City that depend on the integrity of the records management program. However, with our recommendation to eliminate the program that requires updates to master site plans, we believe there will be a sufficient reduction in workload for this group that they will be able to adequately maintain the records management system with existing staff.

Comment [AG26]: This recommendation needs detail. I'm not sure exactly what it means - what it is being recommended?. Adams

Comment [PZ28]: Once you make your next round of corrections and I add to the report and format, I will likely suggest adding some sub headings as it feels like the report needs more structure.

6. Recommendation: The DAC Manager should evaluate the need to add staff to maintain the Records Management Program in light of other recommendations made that impact workload.

Comment [BR29]: I agree. I think it will help us all when we decide what will be included in the general sections of the report so we don't repeat too much under each section.

One of the indicators that we believe is appropriate for measuring staffing levels in this Division is the amount of time customers wait before they can see a specialist. Such a measurement gives a general indication of whether there is sufficient staff based on the number of customers to be seen and the average amount of time each customer spends with staff. As noted above, the goal of the Division has been to have a customer waiting time that does not exceed an average of 15 minutes. We prefer to measure performance

standards based on the ability of the work group to meet a specified target time at least 90% of the time. When we apply this standard of measurement, as stated above, the actual wait time for 90% of the customers is 24 minutes. This number was generated by analyzing all of the wait times and utilizing the PERCENTILE function set at 90% in an Excel spreadsheet. That number represents a combination of all of the wait times for the variety of services being provided. Utilizing the same process produced the table below which identifies the wait times achieved for 90% of the customers based on the specific service they were requesting during August, 2014. We believe this data provides a better indication of where additional staffing should be assigned to achieve the stated reduced customer waiting times.

Table
Development Assistance Center (S+DZC) Wait Times

(Based on 90% of customers served - August 2014)

Service	Count	% of total	90% Wait Time	90% Transaction time
Austin Energy	731	31%	15 minutes	21 minutes
Zoning/Site Plans	390	17%	35 minutes	29 minutes
Research	388	16%	12 minutes	46 minutes
Admin Correc./Exempt	214	9%	24 minutes	1 hr 24 min
Transportation	148	6%	35 minutes	18 minutes
Environmental	91	4%	24 minutes	28 minutes
All Others	399	17%	24 minutes	38 minutes

These wait times and the number of times each activity is requested provides general guidance of which areas warrant consideration for additional staffing at this time. This table indicates special attention should be given to providing additional staffing resources to respond to inquiries in Zoning, Transportation, Administrative Exemptions and Environmental Reviews.

7. **Recommendation:** To reduce customer wait times the DAC Manager should request an additional four (4) staff position or consultants to support Zoning, Transportation, Administrative Exemptions and Environmental Reviews

D. PROCESS ISSUES

Approved Plans Distribution

The location of the Research and Document Sales office directly adjacent to the main floor public entrance provides an ideal location for customers to come to transact

Comment [PZ30]: Would it be helpful to describe how you came up with this number?

Comment [BR31]: Added a description of how the number was generated.

Comment [BR32]: Yes. Some of their staff know, but it would be useful for us to identify that we expect 9 out of 10 customers to be served within the target time. In fact, that might be a good point for the opening statements in the report regarding our philosophy.

Comment [MM[33]: Shouldn't email and phone time be evaluated in the wait time? ALL

Comment [PZ34]: Should these be permanent or temporary? Are full positions needed or could some be half time? New people must need lots of training?

Comment [BR35]: Selecting these particular positions was based on them having the longest wait times in DAC.

business much like they do now to obtain official copies of documents. The fact that the area is currently housing large quantities of plans and permit records suggests that few modifications would be required to expand the functional responsibilities of the staff assigned to that area. With the proposed elimination of the need to maintain updated master site plans both staff resources and space will become available in the plan storage area. As a means of addressing a serious space concern in the adjacent Permit Center workspaces, we recommend that plans that have been approved for permit issuance be stored in the Research and Documents Sales office area until they are retrieved by the permit customer. Staff would be responsible for receiving, tracking and distributing the plans to the customer upon the posting of a receipt in AMANDA confirming the applicant has paid the outstanding permit fees. **This proposal would lead to a significant increase in customer volume for the current level of Research staff who are already understaffed. Comment from Chris Johnson.**

- 8. Recommendation: Plans approved by Commercial and Residential Plan Review Sections should be delivered to the first floor DAC Research and Document Sales Center for retention and subsequent distribution to customers after they have paid their outstanding permit fees.**

Building Directory

Given the location of the Development Assistance Center adjacent to the main public entrance to the building it is reasonable to assume that many members of the public will come to their counter or browse around their waiting room in search of information that might help them identify where they should go to receive the help they are requesting. Directly outside the glass door entrance to the DAC area is a building directory that identifies the names of departments and divisions within the building. For some customers who are familiar with the development process and the terminology, this directory may provide some guidance. This Directory, however, is nothing more than a listing of which workgroups is located on each floor of the building. A customer must understand how each group is organized in Department, Divisions and Sections if they are to know which floor to go to. A more appropriate form of signage would be to list the typical services, in layman terms, that customers may be seeking and then direct them to the appropriate location.

- 9. Recommendation: Signage should be provided adjacent to the Development Assistance Center that lists the type of services provided in the building and the location of the group that provides that service.**

Customer Meeting Documentation

We strongly support the concept of conducting preliminary consultation meetings with customers seeking guidance on how to navigate the development process. By allowing customers to receive guidance early in the plan preparation and submittal process customers should be able to avoid many potential pitfalls. The basic premise behind this

Comment [MM[36]: Implementation of Electronic Plan Review should reduce the time to process the documents. ALL

conclusion is that the customer will~~lth~~ faithfully follow the guidance initially provided~~d~~ by DAC staff and that the plan review staff will honor the positions previously communicated by DAC staff. Unfortunately, employee interviews indicate that there are some occasions when customers will state that they are following the directions provided by DAC staff but the result is something that the plans reviewer in another Division cannot support. The current practice in DAC is to not document the outcomes of the preliminary meetings consulting staff have with customers. This applies to both the free preliminary meetings and those meetings when the customer pays a fee for a more comprehensive meeting INCORRECT - DAC staff does not charge for any consultation. Paid consultations are provided by Commercial Building Plan Review and Residential Review Staff. Comment by Chris Johnson. In some cases minutes of these more formal meetings are created, but they are prepared by the applicant who subsequently requests that staff confirm the contents of the meeting minutes. We believe it is beneficial for all parties to have a written record of the decisions made during these meetings. The record need only be a summary of the decisions that were reached during the meeting with a copy to the customer and a copy retained by the City on AMANDA so that other staff can retrieve when formal plans are submitted. I have some concern about the workload impact of having to create a meeting summary document, create a new folder in the AMANDA system and uploading the documents, if this is something that is going to occur after every customer interaction. This would not be feasible under current staffing levels due to the customer volume that zoning/site plan/transportation consulting planners have each day. Comment from Chris Johnson.

- 10. Recommendation:** DAC staff should complete a meeting summary statement for all formal and informal meetings with customers when specific direction has been provided. This information should be available to other staff through the AMANDA system interface.

Comment [MM[37]: Rather than a summary statement, better coordination between DAC and LUR might be a better option. Summary statements are subject to misinformation and significant increase in workload. ALL

Internal Communications

The results of the employee surveys for this Division indicated that the organization was doing a very poor job of communicating with employees. Employees generally felt that management was not giving them the information that they needed in order to effectively perform their jobs. This included changes in procedures and interpretations that were not being provided in a consistent and timely manner. Additionally, employees complained that problems are frequently ignored and, once identified, are rarely addressed quickly.

- 11. Recommendation:** The DAC Division Manager needs to develop a system to frequently disseminate important information to all employees in the Division.

Comment [BR38]: Should we develop a chart that could apply to how frequently managers at each level of an organization should meet with their respective staff (a bold approach) or should we take an approach specific to each group based on their individual needs? When should it change?

One of the most common methods for both disseminating and collecting valuable information with staff is to have periodic staff meetings. While the consulting planners

Comment [PZ39]: Number of meetings?

| meet daily to discuss individual projects. There does not appear to be any established schedule for internal staff meetings.

12. Recommendation: The DAC Division Manager needs to schedule periodic staff meetings to disseminate information from management and to solicit input from employees.

When management decides to change existing procedures or interpretations there should be an established process that identifies how this information will be initially communicated to staff and where a record of the change will be archived for future reference.

13. Recommendation: The DAC Manager should adopt a process of communicating process or interpretation changes to employees and establish a location where these communications will be archived for future reference.

Public Notices and Handouts

A tour of the building revealed that public information was available in a number of different formats. Frequently they are in the form of paper sheets taped to the counters or pinned to the walls. These sheets, though containing information of value to the customer, were frequently ripped or otherwise disfigured to the point they could not be read. The status of their appearance did not suggest they contained important information. They were also prepared in such a small font that it would be difficult for many customers to read. We don't believe important notices to the public should be taped to the front or top of public counters where they can be easily altered or destroyed. Notices should be placed in secure enclosures that are readily visible and readable to everyone, including for those using wheelchairs.

14. Recommendation: Public Notices should be placed in secure enclosures that are readily visible to the customers.

15. Recommendation: Public Notices intended to be posted should be of large print so they can be easily read by customers.

The Development Assistance Center has a rotating rack containing a large volume of public informational handouts adjacent to their main entrance. We support the concept of providing useful handouts to the public as a means of providing guidance about the various services available at the DAC. To be truly effective, these handouts need to be attention grabbing in design and easy to read. Adjacent to the handouts prepared by the Planning and Development Review Department is a rack of handouts prepared by Austin Energy and Austin Water. In comparison, these are colorful, interesting and easy to read. PDRD should consider taking a lesson from the design of these handouts and incorporate some of those ideas into future public handouts prepared for PDRD.

Comment [BR40]: What makes this awkward is he doesn't have any supervisors reporting to him so every meeting is an all-hands meeting. As recommended, he needs a few supervisors that he can meet with and trust them to get the word out.

Comment [AG41]: Suggest changing this to Public Information so it isn't confused with the many notifications that are required by code.

- 16. Recommendation:** The public information handouts provided in the DAC center should be revised to be more attractive and readable.

Comment [PZ42]: This is covered overall in my section dealing with all functions but can be referenced here.

Public Records Requests

The process of responding to requests from the public, though an essential component of providing a transparent government, can have a significant impact on staff resources. With continued advancement in technology, it is our expectation that some of those tasks currently performed by staff could eventually be performed independently by the customer through appropriate on-line portals. We are certainly sensitive to the need to respect the appropriate confidentiality afforded to all individuals, however, observing the process currently utilized to redact information from City records appears overly cumbersome. We would encourage DAC staff to investigate the availability of any technology that would streamline that process. Other major jurisdictions in Texas that operate under the same set of constraints may have developed a process that includes automating some or all of Austin's current process.

- 17. Recommendation:** DAC Document Management staff should investigate the availability of technology to streamline the process of redacting confidential information from documents requested by the public.

Site Plan Updates

The information provided in employee surveys and interviews and customer comments indicate that the City has allocated substantial resources to the process of requiring minor changes to site plans to be shown as "corrections" and maintaining approved master site plans for virtually every major property in Austin. We question that this is an appropriate use of public resources. Other major jurisdictions simply rely on the site plan submitted with the permit application to reflect the relevant information necessary to approve the project on an existing site. Generally those reviewing the plans will request additional information if necessary to determine what impact the proposed new project will have on any existing projects on the site. An example would be reviewing the total number of parking spaces in a lot serving multiple tenants to determine if adequate parking, including parking for the disabled, was identified on the plans. If the plan is approved then it is scanned and becomes a record in the permit system for that property. There would typically be no requirement for the applicant to also obtain a copy of a master site plan for the entire property and to make changes to that site plan to indicate the proposed new project. We are not aware of any specific section of the Land Development Code that mandates this process.

Comment [AG43]: Suggest Changing this to "Site Plan Corrections" since this is the term used for minor changes to approved Site Plans. Adams

- 18. Recommendation:** The DAC Manager should eliminate the current practice of maintaining an approved master site plan for those properties not otherwise exempt.

Comment [AG44]: Consistent with the suggestion above I would change this recommendation to read "The DAC Manager should eliminate the current practice of processing and maintaining minor corrections to an approved". Adams

Comment [MM[45]: The correction process also driven by other departments, including the Water department, Fire, and Public Works. The recommendation needs to be broadened to reference the other departments.

Eliminating the current practice of requiring master site plans to be continuously updated will not only dramatically decrease staff workload for the review staff but also significantly reduce the workload of the administrative staff assigned to retrieve and file the plans. This action will also give the City the opportunity to remove the large quantity of existing plans on mylars that are consuming valuable space in the Records Research area. Even if the City chooses to not discontinue the program, the fact that the information on the plan mylars are routinely scanned into the system eliminates the need to have them stored on-site.

- 19. Recommendation:** The large quantity of site plan mylars currently stored in the Records Research area should be moved off-site regardless of whether the Corrections~~update~~ program is abandoned or not.